



Statewide Library Performance Indicators

Core Performance Measures

Because of their potential applications to library services planning and because of their usefulness as general indicators of library service on a statewide basis, six measures have been designated as core performance measures:

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|  Visits per capita |  Turnover rate |
|  Expenditures per capita |  Circulation per capita |
|  Holdings per capita |  Income per capita |






General and Service Area Population Tables

The following pages provide summary data for these performance measures on a statewide basis. The population of the library service area is also provided. For each measure, the text gives a general description and identifies some of the factors affecting the measure.

In this publication, the general tables are categorized by the county in which the public library resides and report basic library information on a library-by-library basis.

Interpreting Measures

Although community and individual library circumstances vary, the core measures and general tables can assist Montana's public librarians and trustees as they evaluate library activities and plan improvements in library services. We offer the following suggestions:

-  Analyze the library's statistics in terms of library mission, goals, and objectives. Libraries, even in communities of similar size, have varying funding patterns and community expectations for service. A reference and resource library will show a different pattern of statistics than a popular materials library.
-  Realize that online databases and the Internet have changed library use patterns. Although statewide and national data have not yet been collected on this service, individual libraries should be tracking this use.
-  Remember that performance measure scores are not absolutes. Performance measures are not necessarily precise. Most measures are calculated in percentages and ratios. Do not be too concerned about "decimal points."
-  Use performance measures in context. There are not "right" or "wrong" scores for performance measures. One performance measure alone cannot tell a complete story. Performance measure scores should be interpreted in context with each other and with the library's overall service program and budget.
-  Exercise patience in working toward improving performance measure scores. Changing a library's score on a performance measure is usually not accomplished overnight. Such a change usually requires work over an extended period. Improving a library's score on selected performance measures has to be a cooperative effort among the library director, library trustees, and the local community.